

NND 969042

By fst Date 2 June '98 TMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: November 8, 1971
The Georgetown Club

SUBJECT: US/FMG Relations

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Iyalla of Nigeria
W. Beverly Carter, Jr.

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Ambassador Iyalla had asked rather urgently on Friday November 5 whether it would be possible to have one of our periodic across the board conversations about matters affecting USG and FMG. Such meetings have usually been more exploratory, informal and supplemental than the regular meetings between the Ambassador and Country Director, Foley.

Ambassador Iyalla had two concerns, one was that the US Embassy in Nigeria had been reclassified from class I to class II.

I gather that this information came to him from Lagos sources and he admitted that they had been probably circulated and underscored by "outsiders who wished to make mischief between us."

Iyalla said the first information was that the embassy had been reclassified but subsequently he learned that the reclassification covered the Aid Mission and was based on reduced aid expenditures. He asked if I could clarify the situation.

I was really taken aback at both the information having been learned so quickly by the Nigerians and by the

AF - Mr. Carter
(Drafting Office and Officer)

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PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
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directness in raising the subject. Iyalla said that his government's concern was compounded by the additional story again attributed to "outsiders" that the downgrading in class and the assignment of a Black Ambassador went hand in hand with the US in placing his country on the "back burner". Iyalla said that the subject had first been discussed between his External Affairs Commissioner Dr. Arikpo and himself in New York at the UN just prior to Arikpo's meeting with the Secretary. Joe said that the Secretary's effusive comments about Reinhardt went a long way in correcting this ill-conceived story and that Iyalla himself reminded Arikpo of the Secretary's continued interest in Nigeria.

I concurred in Iyalla's statement and elaborated on the Secretary's respect and enthusiasm for Ambassador Reinhardt and the Secretary's knowledge of and interest in Nigerian Affairs.

I explained to Iyalla that I was not aware of any specific decision which had been taken with regards to our Embassy in Nigeria, that I have been away from my desk on a special assignment, but, I was aware that the Department was looking at a number of embassies around the world. I added that this was a periodic exercise that occurs between the time of a departing ambassador and the arrival of a new one.

I said I knew that Ghana was another country in Africa which was also being re-examined and that this effort had nothing to do with the importance we attached to a country, but rather was an in-house matter concerning administrative costs and size of the official American presence in a country. I said Nigeria still receives the greatest attention of all AF countries, not only in the African Bureau but in the Department and in other branches of the Government.

Iyalla said another reason Lagos would look with discomfort and displeasure at being reclassified was that it occurs at a time when his country was moving forward in terms of its own development and in its leadership in Africa. I indicated that I would check the status of the

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Situation and would be back in touch on this matter.

Iyalla's second concern related to an earlier informal discussion when we discussed the possibility of a visit to Nigeria by Vice President Agnew. The Ambassador placed the highest importance on such a visit and said the FMG would most welcome the Vice President. He hoped that such a visit might be possible in the near future if the President himself would not be traveling in Africa. Iyalla said that the Nigerians would not be offended by Mrs. Nixon in by-passing Nigeria in view of their belief that she'll probably only be going to Liberia and Ghana.

Iyalla mentioned with pleasure President Nixon's warm letter to General Gowon regarding the proposed State visit. Iyalla asked where things stood in reference to a visit next year. I said again I had no information but that President Nixon's letter seemed to speak for itself. I asked Iyalla if he had ideas about when the General would like to come and suggested the ball was now in Nigeria's court. I said my private view was that the Nigerians might better propose certain periods of time and then we could explore their acceptability. Iyalla agreed that this might be a better approach and said he hoped to return to Lagos for consultation in December. He would initiate action from that end.

I finally asked Iyalla if he could give me any further insight into the Nigerian proposal to expel South Africa from the UN. He said he was not aware of the background on this move but that Ogbu was probably being pushed by certain of his African colleagues and that Nigeria had to indulge in a certain amount of rhetoric to maintain its credentials with O.A.U. He said that the FMG can better counsel reason and moderation on some matters when it identifies with selected radical positions from time to time. He promised to obtain a reading on this for me.

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